

DEPARTMENT MUSIC

A HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

CHARLES DEMUYNCK

ROBERTA VEAZEY

CONDUCTORS

RANDY WHEELER

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Tuesday, December 5, 2000
The Centre
7:30 p.m.

UNIVERSITY
OF
EVANSVILLE

A HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

PROGRAM

Sing a Song of Christmas arr. David T. Clydesdale
Anne Geissinger, Mezzo-Soprano

A Ceremony of Carols Benjamin Britten
Wolcum Yole!
There is no Rose
Balulalow
Lydia Herring, Soprano

Deo Gracias
As Dew in Aprille
This Little Babe
Women's Chorus conducted by Roberta Veazey
Ken Gist, Harpist

Les Patineurs (Skater's Waltz) Emil Waldteufel

Christmas Day Gustav Holst
Jennifer Tuley, Soprano
Anne Geissinger, Mezzo-Soprano
Matthew Latta, Tenor
Wesley Miller, Baritone

Parade of the Wooden Soldiers Leon Jessel
arr. Morton Gould

Excerpts from *Messiah* George Frederick Handel
Pastoral Symphony
Why do the Nations

Joseph Hopkins, Baritone
String Ensemble

Let us break their bonds

University Concert Choir

Polonaise from *Christmas Eve* Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

Audience Carol Sing Along (please refer to printed carol texts)

Messiah: Hallelujah Chorus George Frederick Handel

Christmas designs provided by Guest House Florist.

ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL

Charles Demuynck, Conductor

Violin I

Pam Parisi,
Concertmaster
Sarah Atkinson
Anna Christell
Shana Essma
Luke Ho
Michelle Hummel
Erika Proegler
Yuko Saito
Emily Thompson

Violin II

Erin Brady, Principal
Shauna Bily
Kasey Campbell
Mindy Copeland
Amber French
Katrina Goffinet
Brian Maney
Rachel Schlachter

Viola

Gardner McDaniel,*
Principal
Aurora O'Connor,
Assistant Principal
Carol Dallinger*
Erin Paschke
Laura Racine

Cello

Sarah Bielish,*
Principal
Miranda Meadows,
Assistant Principal
Sarah Francis
Kristine Miller
Nicole Poag
Anne Wetzel
Cindy Willis

Bass

Timothy Pearson,*
Principal
Josh Burger
Jason Samples

Flute (Piccolo)

Brooke Jerrell
Melissa Wehrman
Mary Reuter

Oboe

Edwin Lacy*
Katie Christenberry

Clarinet

Brad Miller
Sarah Bryan (also Bass
Clarinet)
Sheila Wickam (also
E♭ Piccolo Clarinet)

Bassoon

Lisa McKelvey
Ellen Berman

Horn

Allan Browning
Elizabeth Plank
Leslie Krodel
Sarah Kleber

Trumpet

Kirk Donovan,
Principal
Chris Nigg
Theresa Krueger
Tad Dickel

Trombone

Jessica Major
Dominic Thompson
Art Fuerte

Tuba

Aaron Sisson

Percussion

Susan Conrad,
Principal
Kat Ranson
Margaret Halbig
Abby Gaskins

Synthesizer/Celesta

Margaret Halbig

Harpsichord

Trisha Wallace

Harp

Ken Gist

*faculty members

PROGRAM NOTES

Benjamin Britten remains one of the most revered and endearing vocal music composers of the 20th century. Best known perhaps for his operas, such as *Peter Grimes* (1945) and *The Turn of the Screw* (1954), and his *War Requiem* (1962), Britten also wrote a great variety of choral music, including several cantata-like works, which he referred to as "church parables."

Britten studied at London's Royal College of Music and moved to the United States for a time following graduation. He achieved his first significant acclaim during this period for works such as his *Violin Concerto* (1939) and *Sinfonia da Requiem* (1941). After three successful years, Britten returned to England.

On the month-long journey home aboard the *M.S. Axel Jackson*, Britten became acquainted with Gerald Bullett's *The English Galaxy of Shorter Poems* (1933). From this collection, Britten selected a group of Christmas texts that date from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, and for the remainder of the voyage, he began to set the poems to music. Originally intended for boys choir and harp, *A Ceremony of Carols* is performed today in a variety of settings for treble voices.

Selections heard tonight include the cheerful, rhythmic welcoming song, "Wolcum Yole," the second of the work's eleven movements. The following movement, "There is no Rose," celebrates the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and urges the listener to follow his holy example. "Balulalow" is a lullaby for the baby set for solo voice and harp. "Deo Gracias" is a declamatory telling of the story of Adam's fall and Jesus' redemptive acts. "As dew in Aprille" offers words of praise to Mary, the mother of the child, with another full choir setting. "This Little Babe" features quick staccato rhythms in its fiery proclamation concerning the baby Jesus' power over Satan.

Britten's countryman, **Gustav Holst**, exhibited an early love and talent for music. His first professional experience was as an organist and choirmaster at various churches in Gloucestershire, but neuritis forced Holst to switch from the organ to the trombone. At the age of twenty-one, he began studies at the Royal College of Music in London with Sir Charles Villiers Stanford and, following his graduation, Holst pursued a career as a trombonist and taught at his alma mater. In 1905, he accepted a position at the St. Paul's Girl's School in Hammersmith, England, a position that he held for most of the rest of his life; many of his compositions, such as his *St. Paul's Suite* (1913), reflect the deep affection he felt for the institution.

Holst's orchestral reputation rests on *The Planets* (1916), a programmatic work with mythological overtones that was based on the seven known planets at the time. He also ventured into the philosophy of non-western cultures, as is demonstrated by his settings of Brahman scriptures and his opera, *Savitri*. Like his fellow Englishman and close friend Ralph Vaughan Williams, however, Holst loved the music of Britain and wrote many works inspired by English lore and folk music. *Christmas Day* is such a work. Composed in 1910, the work uses John Mason Neale's English translation of the Latin hymn, *In Dulci Jubilo* and sets it to a traditional German tune. The hymn is arranged for chorus and orchestra in a wonderfully festive, and particularly English, manner and expresses well the joy of the Christmas season.

Like Holst, **Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov** was an intensely nationalistic composer. One of a group of nineteenth-century Russian composers known as "The Five," Rimsky-Korsakov strove to bring the Russian people a national music based on their history, literature and folk culture. A former naval officer and inspector of military bands, Rimsky-Korsakov also taught at the St. Petersburg Conservatory of Music and was known for his wonderfully imaginative works and creative orchestrations.

Rimsky-Korsakov's greatest compositional triumphs during his lifetime were his operas, which frequently blended Russian literature and high cultural history with more rustic and primitive folklore. His opera, *Christmas Eve* (1894), draws its basic plot from a story by Nikolai Gogol, but many of the opera's more unusual elements are Rimsky-Korsakov's own creations based on a combination of pagan elements and rituals with Gogol's tale. The opera, filled with supernatural creatures and comic subplots, follows the attempts of a young blacksmith to woo the daughter of a Cossack. Scorned and ridiculed by his beloved, the blacksmith wins her favor only when he presents her with a pair of ornate boots granted to him on his request by the Empress herself. The festive "Polonaise" begins the scene in which the blacksmith makes his unusual request of the monarch; the dance introduces the audience to the court of the tsaritsa and admirably sets the festive mood present in the palace during the ongoing Christmas celebration.

George Frederick Handel was a composer inspired by international styles. He studied music as a young boy in Germany before moving to Italy in 1706. He traveled throughout Italy and learned the Italian opera style before returning to Germany in 1710 and assuming the post of musical director to the Elector of Hanover. The associations between Hanover and the English monarchy soon produced many opportunities for travel to London, where Handel first achieved success with Italian operas while absorbing the English choral style.

Handel's original intent upon his relocation to London was to produce Italian opera under the auspices of the newly formed Royal Academy of Music, but the growing success of English vernacular entertainments quickly diminished the London public's desire for Italian works. Handel likewise turned to vernacular works, but rather than operas in English, he chose to write oratorios. Initial successes were promising but failed to achieve the financial results for which Handel hoped. At a time of desperation, Handel was presented with the opportunity to give a benefit concert in Dublin "for the relief of the prisoners in the several gaols (jails), and for the support of Mercer's Hospital in Stephen Street, and of the Charitable Infirmary on the Inn's Quay." Shortly after this invitation, Handel's friend, poet and librettist Charles Jennens, presented Handel with a compilation of scripture passages taken from various Old and New Testament books that focused on the prophecy, life, sacrifice and future glory of Jesus Christ. Handel was so moved by the collection that he began to set the libretto to music, and in twenty-four days, from mid-August to mid-September of 1741, Handel composed the 2 hours and 30 minutes of music that make up *Messiah*.

The oratorio premiered on April 13, 1742, in Dublin and was an immediate success. Music historian R. A. Streatfield cited *Messiah* as "the first instance in the history of music of an attempt to view the mighty drama of human redemption from an artistic viewpoint." *Messiah's* popularity no doubt derives in large measure from its subject matter, but it is also superb music. A case in point is the wonderfully lyrical "Pastoral Symphony," which serves the dramatic purpose of providing a transition from the biblical verses dealing with the prophecies of Jesus' birth to those that tell the actual story of the shepherds, the angels and the baby in the manger. "Why do the Nations" comes from the second part of the oratorio and is a setting of Psalms 2:1-2. The emotion in the scriptural passage is clearly portrayed in Handel's music with the use of the raging tremolo in the strings as well as the intensely rhythmic character and declamatory nature of the vocal part. The following chorus, "Let us break their bonds," sets the next verse of Psalms 2, and is therefore a direct continuation of the previous aria. The intense emotions remain and are heard in the expressive nature and increasingly contrapuntal texture of the choral parts. The famous "Hallelujah" chorus, based on selected verses from the Revelation of St. John, concludes the second part of the oratorio and affirms God's position as ruler of all. The repetitive motive of "Hallelujah" and "for ever" in the chorus, as well as the rhythmic chord progressions strengthen the message of the piece.

Several traditions surround *Messiah*. One of these is its now common and integral association with Christmas, despite the fact that it was originally conceived for and was first performed during the Easter season. The oratorio, too, has commonly been subject to an editor's or arranger's pen and to the whims of performers. To be fair, Handel began this tradition, composing new selections, changing instrumentation and freely editing his own work for individual performances and performers, a practice perfectly in keeping with the practical mindset of Baroque composers and performers. The immense popularity of the work, however, has led many subsequent composers, including Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, to offer their own orchestrations or versions of the work. Many of these versions, particularly Mozart's, have achieved great success on occasion. The orchestration presented this evening, however, is consistent with Handel's own preferences. And, of course, the tradition of the audience standing during the singing of the "Hallelujah" chorus remains. This tradition, too, dates from Handel's own time. Some say that it began at one of the first performances of the work, when King George II was so awestruck by the piece that he stood up. Another version of the tale suggests that the King had fallen asleep and that the thunderous entrance of the choir startled him. He naturally shot up from his seat to yell, "What insolence!" The audience, whether from dutiful reverence or abject embarrassment, followed the king's example. Regardless of which circumstance, if either, is correct, the tradition remains. Please feel free to observe it if desired.

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